

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0302

CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 1753

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: LOPEZ REGA'S TROUBLES WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. THE HIERARCHY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ARGENTINA ISSUED A PASTORAL LETTER ON MARCH 11 WHICH LAMENTED THE CONFUSION CAUSED BY "SMALL NUCLEI WHICH CALL THEMSELVES A CATHOLIC CHURCH." THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY IN REFERENCE TO THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC CHURCH, A SMALL SECT FOUNDED BY DEFROCKED CATHOLIC PRIESTS WHICH MIXES A GOOD DEAL OF SPIRITUALISM (SOME SAY VOODOO) WITH CATHOLIC DOCTRINE. THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THE SECT HAS ITS HEADQUARTERS IN BRAZIL.

2. WHAT PROMPTED THE BISHOPS TO ISSUE THE PASTORAL LETTER AT THIS, THE FIRST MEETING OF THE HIERARCHY SINCE THE NEW YEAR, BECAME CLEAR WHEN THE LETTER WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE LAMENTABLE CONFUSION HAD TAKEN ON A NEW DIMENSION IN THE WAKE OF THE MASS OFFICIATED BY SAID ORTHODOX APOSTOLIC CHURCH ON DEC 24 AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE OF THE ALTAR OF THE FATHERLAND. IT WAS LOPEZ REGA, A CONVINCED SPIRITUALIST, WHO ORGANIZED THOSE CEREMONIES AND WHO INVITED THE ORTHODOX APOSTOLIC CHURCH TO SAY THE MASS. THE PAPAL NUNCIO HAD MENTIONED THE INCIDENT TO AMBASSADOR HILL SOME WEEKS AGO AND INDICATED THE ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY WAS ANGRY WITH LOPEZ REGA BECAUSE OF IT. WITH THE PASTORAL LETTER, THE HIERARCHY'S RESENTMENT HAS COME INTO THE OPEN.

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3. LOPEZ REGA'S RELATIONS WITH THE CHURCH HAVE BEEN FURTHER

COMPLICATED BY A QUARREL WHICH HAS DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND RAUL LACABANNE, THE FEDERAL INTERVENTOR IN CORDOBA AND NOW A POLITICAL ALLY OF LOPEZ REGA.

4. COMMENT. THE PASTORAL LETTER IS AIMED MOST DIRECTLY AT THE ORTHODOX APOSTOLIC CHURCH. GIVEN THAT LOPEZ REGA WAS BEHIND THE QUESTIONED MASS AND THAT THE ALTAR OF THE FATHERLAND HAS BEEN EMBRACED BY MRS PERON AS HER PERSONAL PROJECT, HOWEVER, THE LETTER REPRESENTED IMPLIED CRITICISM OF THEM AS WELL--ESPECIALLY OF THE FORMER. IT IS IRONIC THAT DIFFICULTIES SHOULD ARISE BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND MRS PERON, WHO ENERGETICALLY PROFESSES TO BE A DEVOUT ROMAN CATHOLIC. BUT IN VIEW OF LOPEZ REGA'S INFLUENCE OVER HER AND HIS ADDICTION TO MUMBO JUMBO, IT IS NOT TOO SURPRISING.

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